

Striking gold at the

Solano County Fair

The Solano County Fairgrounds is an economic, social and cultural treasure for local communities. In 2002, the fair contributed more than \$26.2 million in economic impact to Solano County, created 291 local jobs and generated \$378,654 in local tax revenues.^{1 2 3}

The Solano County Fair, a nonprofit organization, operates and conducts the fairgrounds and annual fair on behalf of the county. Despite the fair organization's official status as part of the California network of fairs, it does not receive money from the state general fund. Rather, it is funded through revenues it generates locally and \$40,000 it receives annually from a licensing fee on wagers placed on horse racing. Pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing in California was allowed through a constitutional amendment in 1933, with a portion of the revenues designated to support the network of California fairs.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's Division of Fairs and Expositions engaged the firm of KPMG LLP to measure the annual economic and social impacts of the Solano County Fair and produce a report detailing their findings.⁴ Based on information presented in this report, the fair organization should be considered a gold mine for their community and the Golden State.

Economic Impact: At the Assayer's Office

In 2002, the fair organization created significant economic impacts on the local economy.

- Overall impact of spending by all participants at fairtime and year-round events resulted in a total economic impact on the county of more than \$26.2 million.
- Attendee direct spending at fairtime and year-round events totaled more than \$12 million.
- Annual personal income impact from attendee, fair organization and fair-related business spending totaled about \$7.5 million.
- Full-time equivalent jobs created by the fair organization through direct employment and multiplier impacts reached 291.
- City and county governments collected an estimated total of \$378,654 in tax revenues from year-round activities held at the fairgrounds.
- For each worker the fair organization and related business employs, an estimated 4.20 additional jobs are created in the county. For each dollar that economic participants pay their employees, an estimated \$2.10 in total personal income is produced in the local economy.
- Each dollar spent by the fair organization and year-round event participants generates an estimated 22 cents of additional spending in the county, for a total impact of \$1.22 per dollar spent.

Agriculture: The Gold Nugget

A central feature of the fair is to educate people about the importance of agriculture in California.

- Fifty-five percent of fairgoers felt that they knew more about agriculture after going to the fair.
- The fair is a critical part of the local junior livestock program, which educates young people about the breeding, raising and grooming of farm animals. The junior livestock auction at the fair grossed \$96,398, with 154 animals purchased by 78 buyers.
- During 2002, the fair judged 5,516 exhibits, including 730 agricultural exhibits. This resulted in \$43,277 paid in prize money fair participants.

Fair-Related Businesses: Services to a Golden Industry

Fair-related businesses provide many goods and services that are essential to the fair experience.

- Commercial exhibitors generated nearly \$2.5 million in local spending, \$809,198 in personal income, 27 local jobs and \$17,533 in local taxes. Attendee spending on commercial exhibitor merchandise totaled approximately \$5.2 million, which generated \$70,965 in local taxes.
- Combined economic impact of spending by commercial exhibitors plus attendee spending on commercial merchandise at fairs and year-round events totaled more than \$7.6 million.

- Concessionaires created \$784,816 in local spending, \$385,540 in local personal income, 10 local jobs and \$5,462 in local taxes. Attendee direct spending on food and beverages totaled more than \$1.1 million, which generated \$15,478 in local taxes.
- Total economic impact from the carnival generated \$70,596 in local spending, one local job, \$19,838 in local personal income and \$407 in local taxes.
- Entertainment at the fair created \$158,947 in local spending, \$129,857 in local personal income, two local jobs and \$1,535 in local taxes.

Community Groups: Mining for Gold

The fair is a major venue for local community groups and nonprofit organizations to raise money and awareness of their programs.

- In 2002, nonprofit groups raised more than \$43,000 at the Solano County Fairgrounds for community programs and services. Include the \$96,398 raised at the junior livestock auction, and more than \$139,400 was raised for community benefits.
- Twenty-three of California's fairgrounds host a satellite wagering facility at which wagers may be placed on horse racing. A percentage of the total amount wagered is paid to local governments for services provided to the facility. Under this program, the Solano County Fair contributed \$88,467 to Solano County in 2002.

Attendees: A Golden Treasure

Californians love their fairs and fairground events.

- Fairtime attendance was 114,636 in 2002, and year-round events attracted another 270,340 people. Total annual attendance at the Solano County Fairgrounds was 384,976, which represents 95 percent of the county's population.
- Attendee spending at year-round events totaled more than \$9.7 million.
- The average visitor attends the fair 2.9 times per year and lives within 100 miles.

Social and Cultural Impacts: Giving Back

While the economic impact of the fair is remarkable, it is the social and cultural impacts that may leave the most lasting impression on Californians.

- The fair provides a focal point for community members to celebrate their heritage, compete in a variety of events, hold family reunions, display and view artwork, learn about other cultures, premier new inventions, and showcase the best of California.
- Ninety percent of attendees agreed that the fair provided worthwhile community benefits.

Conclusion: A Golden Legacy

As this profile of the Solano County Fair illustrates, fairs entertain and educate, but they also have immense economic, educational, social and cultural impacts. Economic impacts range from spending by attendees and businesses to nonprofit fundraising to job creation and to tax revenues. From people's paychecks to community services, the return on investment from fairs is widespread.

Fairs, however, represent much more than dollars-and-cents. Fairs offer a link between urban and rural California. They serve as tools for educating Californians about the importance of agriculture and introducing young people to both traditional and innovative aspects of life on the farm.

Fairs reach far beyond their agrarian roots and encourage industries and individuals to strive for excellence through competitions. Winning the blue ribbon at a fair competition is a great incentive to showcase the best of California.

Finally, through their social and cultural impacts, fairs embody the community spirit and highlight the diversity of the Golden State.

Gray Davis, Governor of California

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Solano County Fair

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¹ The economic impacts presented in this profile are local in nature and are for Solano County only. Economic impacts presented in *Fairs: Exploring a California Gold Mine* are for the entire state of California. Since the impact areas in the two studies are different, results of the two studies are not directly comparable.

² For study methodology, refer to Appendix B of *Fairs: Exploring a California Gold Mine*.

³ Jobs are measured by full-time equivalent counts. Due to the heavy reliance on temporary and part-time workers, the actual number of jobs is much greater.

⁴ This report was prepared by KPMG at the request of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Division of Fairs and Expositions (F&E) for the exclusive benefit of CDFA-F&E and is subject to limitations described herein. KPMG relied upon data and other information provided by F&E and other sources, which were not independently verified by KPMG.